

August 18, 2020

Office of Equity Assurance

Title IX Sexual Harassment

To: All Staff

From: Anne Roy, Title IX Coordinator/ Manager, Office of Equity Assurance

Howard County Public School System is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming educational and working environment for everyone — an environment in which sex or gender discrimination, including sexual misconduct such as sexual harassment and sexual assault is not tolerated.

Howard County Public School System has reiterated its position with regard to creating an environment that respects all stakeholders by advancing very specific language in Board of Education [Policy 1020, Sexual Discrimination](#). This policy details the behavioral expectations of students and staff as well as processes for reporting unwanted inappropriate acts of harassment or assault.

On May 6, 2020, The Department of Education the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued new regulations mandating how K-12 School systems, as well as colleges and universities must investigate and adjudicate sexual misconduct cases under Title IX, a federal statute that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex or gender in any federally funded education program or activity. Howard County's Public School System's current policy and procedures comply with the statute and with prior OCR guidance. However, like all educational institutions that receive federal funding, the HCPSS is required to amend its current policies to implement these new regulations.

The HCPSS is carefully reviewing the new regulations and determining how to implement the new requirements in a way that best preserves our current procedures' fairness, thoroughness, and sensitivity to the needs of all parties and witnesses.

Amongst the key provisions of the new regulations is an expanded role for the Title IX Coordinator, a new definition for sexual harassment under Title IX, and the development of a specific grievance process for formal complaints of Title IX sexual harassment. As such, all individuals involved in the investigation and handling of any sexual harassment complaints need to be aware of the following:

1. Any "report" of sexual harassment needs to be forwarded to the Title IX coordinator upon receipt. A "report" may be informal and may be either verbal or written. All established reporting methods may be utilized or incidents may be reported directly to the Title IX coordinator at TitleIXCoordinator@hcpss.org.

2. Administrators/supervisors will provide written acknowledgment of reports received that includes confirmation the report was forwarded to the Title IX Coordinator.
3. The Title IX Coordinator will meet with all complainants and provide them with the opportunity to file a formal complaint.
4. The Title IX Coordinator will determine which investigative procedures must be followed and oversee the implementation of supportive members.
5. All parties will be offered supportive measures, whether or not a formal complaint is filed.

Additional information regarding reporting and Title IX Compliance may be found at <https://www.hcpss.org/schools/sexual-discrimination-harassment/>.